

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

KOREA 50 YEARS LATER: WHY ARE WE STILL THERE?

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## ABSTRACT

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This SRP explores the present U.S. policies toward Korea and will answer the question, does the United States need to be forward deployed in Korea? In the past 10 years the United States military has demonstrated its ability to project power over extended lines of communication. Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were a wake up call in force projection for the Army, as a result the Army increased lift procurements as it transformed to a lighter force. The United States is now capable of projecting a creditable military force around the globe in weeks rather than months. Our capabilities today and in the future enable the United States to defend, deter, and if necessary defeat enemy forces that threaten or attack the nation or its allies. These capabilities also provide us the opportunity to reduce our overseas presence without reducing our commitment to security. This paper argues that "less is better for Korea." However, reducing tension on the Korean Peninsula can only occur when North Korea agrees to dismantle its nuclear program. Perhaps then, the United States can best influence this reunification with fewer troops on the ground in Korea.



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## KOREA 50 YEARS LATER: WHY ARE WE STILL THERE?

### BACKGROUND:

In 2003, the world observed the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of the Korean War. Over a half century later, however, Korea remains divided without a formal declaration ending hostilities. The United States, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and members of the United Nations have steadfastly remained along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) with their eyes focused north at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). While tension between North and South Korea has risen and receded much like the tides of Inch eon, the two sides remain committed to the Armistice, or at least to the spirit of that agreement.

For the last 58 years, the United States has pursued peace through a policy of deterrence, containment, and engagement. Following World War II, deterrence and containment consisted of the use of diplomacy backed up by military force to protect United States interests, both vital and important.<sup>1</sup> However, in 1950, deterrence failed to restrain North Korea from launching an attack on South Korea. The U.S. military was in poor shape following the demobilization that took place at the end of World War II. As a result, the early days of the Korean War went in favor of communist aggression. By June 1951 the war had settled into the pattern it would follow for the next two years: bloody fighting along the 38th parallel, most of it in trench warfare reminiscent of World War I. Two years later, the armistice was signed in July by the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers, and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army. The armistice was between military commanders and not a treaty between nations. South Korea, under the leadership of President Syngman Rhee, was prepared to continue the war but in the end acquiesced to pressure from the United States and agreed to abide by the agreement. The Armistice went into effect July 17, 1953. Since then our policies and those of South Korea have sought to deter, contain, and engage North Korea. The two most recent historical attempts at engagement were the 1994 Agreed Framework and the "Sunshine Policy" pursued by the South Korean government under the leadership of President Kim Dae-Jung and later by his successor, President Roh Moo-Hyun.<sup>2</sup>

Today, the United States remains committed to the stability and security of Northeast Asia with the deployment of 100,000 troops.<sup>3</sup> As one observer has argued, "the U.S. military presence is well accepted by South Korea for its own security interests."<sup>4</sup> What also remains in effect is the forward deployment of 37,000 United States soldiers; most of whom are stationed forward near the DMZ with their alliance partners, the Republic of Korea Army (ROK). All are

within range of North Korean artillery. However, South Korea may be growing apprehensive since President George W. Bush took office in January 2001.<sup>5</sup> During his first summit meeting with South Korean President Kim, President Bush made it clear that future negotiations with North Korea would require the need for “complete verification.”<sup>6</sup> His new administration was not convinced the Clinton-era Agreed Framework had gone far enough to curb the nuclear ambitions of North Korean dictator Kim Jung-Il. Following 9/11, the focus appeared to shift away from North Korea as the U.S. declared war on terrorism. But North Korea was once again center stage when President Bush identified that country in the January 29, 2002, State of the Union address, as a member of the “Axis of Evil”.<sup>7</sup> While South Korea was moving forward with engagement, the “Sunshine Policy,” the United States was taking an increasing hard-line approach with North Korea’s leadership.

One year after 9/11, President Bush released a new National Security Strategy (NSS). The language within this document has become known as the “Bush Doctrine” or “pre-emptive strike doctrine.” According to the NSS, the United States is prepared to use force to protect its citizens and its national interests at home and abroad from rogue regimes, terrorist organizations, and nation states that promote, sponsor, or harbor terrorist organizations. The NSS puts both friend and foe on notice that the United States is prepared to use “every tool in our arsenal”<sup>8</sup> to combat terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by either terrorist organizations or rogue regimes.

In October 2002, during a U.S. – DPRK conference, the North Korean government announced to Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly that they had been enriching uranium for several years. This activity was inconsistent with the 1994 Agreed Framework but confirmed U.S. intelligence information provided to Kelly in advance of the meeting. When diplomatic efforts failed to get North Korea to reconfirm its obligation to the 1994 Agreed Framework,<sup>9</sup> the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization<sup>10</sup> (KEDO) voted to suspend fuel oil shipments in December 2002, which can be read as both a diplomatic and economic sanction. The crisis has since been marked by strong rhetoric by both the U.S. and DPRK leadership, although in the latter part of 2003 China was able to broker the first multilateral dialogue involving six nations: Japan, Russia, China, North Korea, South Korea and the United States.

Multi-national talks must succeed in bringing this crisis to a conclusion. The future requires more than a solution for today’s crisis; it must provide for long term peace and stability. The Cold War ended over a decade ago and it is time to consider our nation’s interest in Northeast Asia and plan for the future. The future may mean restructuring our military footprint within the region and it should be bold enough to envision a reunited Korea.

## **U.S. POLICY VERSUS NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR AMBITION:**

The United States interest sought in Northeast Asia is a secure environment that promotes the protection of basic human rights, political freedom and economic freedom. According to the current U.S. Administration, the ends can arguably be reached by freeing the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons. Once the peninsula is freed of nuclear weapons or the threat of nuclear weapons, further steps towards reunification can be accomplished. But for now North Korea appears to be determined to possess a nuclear capability.

Since the North Korean leadership admitted they have been developing nuclear weapons, and expelled United Nation monitors, the United States has been attempting to “get the horse back in the stable” diplomatically. North Korea does not appear ready to scrap its nuclear program without certain concessions. This has been referred to by some as nuclear blackmail.<sup>11</sup> However, the North Koreans have indicated that they might consider ending their nuclear program if the United States will agree to a treaty of non-aggression. Both countries talk past each other as they try to convince the global audience of the virtues of their own desires, each one demanding the other take the first step. Kim Jung-Il continues to play a diplomatic chess game, a game of brinkmanship he has learned well, judging by past concessions.

The North Korean dictator is well known for his brinkmanship skills and is often viewed as an irrational actor. Is Kim Jung-Il irrational? I would argue he is a rational actor who is not clearly understood when measured by Western standards. Kim Jung-Il's behavior is frequently misinterpreted as irrational when in fact he is simply pushing a dangerous situation to the limit so that his opponent will concede. As two Korea analysts have observed, “Dictators generally want to survive, and Kim is no exception. He has not launched a war, because he has good reason to think he would face fatal opposition from the United States and South Korea.”<sup>12</sup> His will to survive was most recently noted when the leader agree to engage in multi-lateral six nation talks held in August/September 2003. But in the end Kim Jung-Il used the talks to once again raise the stakes by announcing the intent to “conduct a nuclear test.”<sup>13</sup> Kim's maneuvering once again pushed the limit by challenging those observers who may have doubted North Korea's ability to conduct such a test.

Let's assume, as some observers suggest, that North Korea does possess the ability and material to build half dozen nuclear weapons, as has been suggested by James T. Laney and Jason T. Shaplen.<sup>14</sup> Having a nuclear device without a delivery system is of limited value, unless you are planning to sell the device to the highest bidder. However, North Korea has been busy developing its missile delivery system. In August 1998, North Korea demonstrated

its limited ability to field a missile delivery system, the *Taepo Dong-1*, by test firing an unarmed missile over Japan.<sup>15</sup> We know from this missile launch that North Korea possesses the technology to deliver both conventional and nuclear weapons, but accuracy and achievable distance remain questionable. At present, the longest range the North Koreans can achieve successfully is 800 miles with the *Nodong* missile; Japan and South Korea are within this range. North Korea does not yet possess the missile technology to reach the continental United States. Unless they sell a nuclear device to a terrorist organization that possesses the global reach and technical capabilities to detonate such a device in America or against a target of vital interest, there may be no immediate threat. Furthermore, "Unlike shadowy terrorist cells, nations cannot hide from a retaliatory strike."<sup>16</sup> And this may in fact be the greatest deterrence.

North Korea does however, possess a conventional military that is fully capable of launching an attack against South Korea. Even if North Korea does not use or sell a nuclear device it can still threaten the stability of the region with these conventional forces. Based on an intelligence estimate, this conventional first strike capability would most likely result in initial success as Seoul would be temporarily overrun or by passed. However, the logistical constraints of war would preclude the North Korean Armies from continuing the attack. Meanwhile the Combined Forces Command/United Nations Command operating under United States lead would launch a successful counterattack that would liberate Seoul and continue to drive north. This scenario, or one very similar, is the most likely course of events. The North realizes it would not win and that is probably the primary reason it remains north of the DMZ and continues to arm itself against an attack. Because it can no longer count on China or Russia to provide the nuclear umbrella, North Korea must become self-reliant. China, which continues to reach out to the world as they experiment with capitalist economics, becoming South Korea's largest importer in 2003, is keenly interested in resolving this crisis, but not on the side of North Korea. Russia also continues to distance itself from North Korea; supporting the United States on economic issues and military intervention.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, with or without regional support, North Korea continues to threaten the security and stability of Northeast Asia and has the means available to act in unexpected ways if it so chooses. Kim Jung-Il continues to demand unilateral talks and a treaty of non-aggression, while threatening to conduct a nuclear test. This being the back drop for negotiations, and given our commitment to our allies in that region, it is understandable why Alexander Mansurov argues the "Bush White House is adamant that no peace negotiation shall take place until and unless North Korea verifiably dismantles its nuclear program and disarms its missile arsenal."<sup>18</sup> The United States and North Korea both approached this crisis initially by backing into a corner

and refusing to move until the other one did. Instead of moving closer to negotiation, they grew farther apart as the two governments exchanged harsh words. The public record speaks very clearly to the hard and often harsh verbiage used by the Bush administration to describe North Korea as a member of the "axis of evil," "rogue state," "repressive regime," and "prison for its own people." As Mansourov pointed out, the North Koreans "are aware of President Bush's intense personal negative feelings about the North Korean leader."<sup>19</sup> They have read the NSS and, like the Iraqis, understand the Bush Doctrine. Using the sound bites from past public statements made by President Bush and the words contained in the NSS, the DPRK state-run media can no doubt convince their own citizens they are most likely next after Iraq. The world media has over the past years "fanned the fires" concerning the crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Some have even raised the possibility of military intervention, and judging by the strong rhetoric of the Bush Administration this might even seem plausible.

However, military intervention is not an option. President Bush has stated that no options have been taken off the table, but has also tried to communicate that the U.S. has no plan to attack North Korea.<sup>20</sup> Secretary of State Colin Powell has stated "we are looking for a diplomatic solution. We are working in concert with all of North Korea's neighbors to find a peaceful solution. We have made it clear, the President has made it clear on many occasions, I have made it clear, that we have no intention of invading North Korea, of attacking North Korea."<sup>21</sup> These public statements and assurance were necessary as the United States prepared to conduct combat operations in Iraq, but the media reporting on our deployments and positioning of forces did nothing to ease the situation on the Korean peninsula.

During the build up for OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), military units were repositioned to support the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander. The domino effect was that other units were repositioned at the request of the United States Pacific Command (PACOM) Commander to insure North Korea did not attempt any action while the United States was focused on Iraq. Assurances by the Bush Administration must be believed credible in order to relieve tension on the peninsula. These troop movements were simply a Flexible Deterrent Option (FDO) sought by the Combatant Commander and approved by the President to keep pressure on North Korean during our preparation and execution of OIF. Nonetheless, this repositioning of strategic bombers did not ease tension on the peninsula; in fact, it had the opposite effect north of the DMZ. The Bush administration said we would not attack and at the same time they repositioned strategic bombers. The presence of 100,000 troops in Northeast Asia can also be seen as an immediate threat by North Korea in light of the United States most recent actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. But the men and women of the

United States military should not be viewed as a preemptive threat on the Korean peninsula. U.S. Forces continue to provide stability, deployed in sufficient strength to be a defensive force versus the number required to be perceived as offensive.

Besides the forward basing of military forces in the region other elements of power have been used to maintain the status quo on the Korean peninsula. Economic sanctions, for example, are more often used in dealing with North Korea. We have seen how effective these can be in the recent past as Libya agreed to dismantle its own nuclear ambitions in exchange for the lifting of UN economic sanctions.

Economic sanctions have been tried in the past with various degrees of success. The United States will not starve the people of North Korea, so they permit food aid to enter the ports, but are unable to properly monitor the distribution of this aid to insure the aid goes to the people and not just the military personnel. The United States remains concerned that the North Koreans are continuing to ship weapons and drugs, the only exports they have that will provide them hard currency. Short of blockading the ports of North Korea, our Navy stands ready to detain in international waters North Korean ships suspected of transporting illegal weapons. Furthermore, we are assisting Japan to stem the flow of illegal drugs from North Korea into their country by interdicting the flow of illegal drugs from North Korea to Japan. These sanctions have had limited success, but the illegal drug traffic still continues and searching every ship exceeds current capabilities in the region. Another form of sanction was implemented in July 2003, when the Executive Board members of KEDO (the United States, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and the European Union) met in January 2004 to discuss issues relating to the implementation of the suspension of the light water reactor program in North Korea and stated that they saw no future in this project. KEDO will continue to refuse to move forward with the light water reactor project as long as North Korea continues to pursue its current course. The economic sanctions and the flexible deterrent options employed to date sought to marginalize North Korea and reduce its threat to the region, but have not stopped the proliferation of nuclear weapons. U.S. troop deployment, military exercises, failure to provide North Korea light water reactors as stipulated in the 1994 Agreed Framework, and the identification of North Korea among those nations composing the "Axis of Evil" have all factored into the crisis situation. While the crisis on the peninsula appears to be at a historical high with both the United States and North Korean governments appearing at times to be at an impasse, we are not heading towards World War III as was feared in 1950. The United States must continue to use all the instruments of national power; diplomatic, informational, military, and economic to obtain the goals of the United States and its regional allies: a stable and secure Korean Peninsula.

Building consensus among the regional players on what if any sanctions are employed will enable the United States to avoid claims of unilateralism. Nor can the actions taken by the United States appear to indicate we are abandoning Northeast Asia. On the contrary, we are steadfastly committed.

The United States commitment to Korea has not changed. We are committed to peace in Northeast Asia and our allies understand our commitment goes beyond the forward deployment of troops or repositioning of military forces within the region.<sup>22</sup> The United States will remain committed to peace in the region both today and tomorrow, whether or not our footprint decreases in the future.

The future in this region should involve even fewer troops. Given the proven capabilities of the United States military and those capabilities that will be obtained in the next 10-20 years, the footprint on the Korean Peninsula and within the immediate area of operations (Japan) could be reduced. We have the ability and operational reach today to station our troops further from the shores of Korea and still be responsive. Many would argue this would not be feasible given the current nuclear situation, but I believe otherwise. Perhaps conventional troop strengths, both of the United States and North Korea, should be part of the current discussion concerning the nuclear disarmament of North Korea. The United States and South Korean governments have already agreed to pull U.S. forces south of Seoul. However, moving troops back from the DMZ should only be seen as the first step towards reducing the overall footprint on the Korean Peninsula. Once the troops are removed from the DMZ, a build down program should be developed to reduce the end-strength of each military while providing assurances of protection. Perhaps it would even be possible to agree to the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea in the future.

The United States cannot withdraw from the region completely. The vital interests of the United States preclude it from such a drawdown. I agree that complete withdrawal is not feasible nor is it in our nation's best interest. Many analysts have argued that to withdraw U.S. forces from Asia would heighten the risk of nations engaging in arms races, both conventional and nuclear. Given the prospects of an arms race in Northeast Asia, the United States must remain engaged in the region. U.S. forces must remain forward deployed in Asia, but I am not convinced they need to be on the Korean Peninsula. Positioning the military and reducing conventional forces are two methods to underwrite peace and stability in the region. The road map to a sustained peace in the region should begin by denuclearizing the Korean peninsula.



## **A ROADMAP TO REUNIFICATION:**

The road map to reunification must provide for the military protection of both South and North Korea during this time of transition, it must provide a stable environment in which economical growth can occur, and it must provide verifiable assurance that the Korean Peninsula remains nuclear free. To accomplish this, the United States must continue to serve as the off-shore flexible deterrent option for its own vital interests in the area as well as being the balancer of power within the region. While currently the United States has no peer competitor in the region, this will not most likely be the truth in 2020. China has been modernizing its military and currently out spends all other countries in the area. The United States must, therefore, continue to provide the protection it has for the past 50 years. This protection also provides access to our allies. The United States must tactfully reinforce alliances within the region, for the future strength will be derived from collective cooperation among the nations in the region. The United States must do this in such a way as not to instigate an arms race with China while encouraging other nation states within this region to take a more active role in the defense of a nuclear free Northeast Asia.

A logical path to reunification would begin with North Korea renouncing its nuclear ambitions. This is a precursor to reunification. North Korea must agree to allow the United Nations to return the inspectors so that the world can be assured that North Korea is fulfilling its promises. At the same time, the United States and members of KEDO must be willing to fulfill the agreement to build two light water nuclear reactors or provide alternative energy to North Korea. While these nations are stepping back from the nuclear threshold, the United States and its allies in the region must continue to insure the economy continues to prosper.

Prosperity is essential to the recovery of North Korea's economy. In order for economic recover to take place, free trade and investment must exist within the region. Freedom of navigation insures countries are able to gain access to the global markets. However, neither North nor South Korea can provide the assurance that the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) will remain open. The United States must continue to insure the sea lanes remain open and that we and our allies are afforded unfettered access to these lines of commerce from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. None of the regional actors possesses the naval inventory capable of patrolling the SLOCs alone. Control of these SLOCs is critical to the economies of the United States and its allies, and should be a collective effort. Solid economies are a prerequisite to underwriting the cost of reunification.

South Korea has already demonstrated its ability to become a major player in the financial community. However, neither South Korea nor China can underwrite the collapse of North

Korea as West Germany did when East and West Germany reunited. The road to reunification will require a methodical merging of North Korea's economy with the global economy. One way this can be accomplished is through the use of free trade zones established within North Korea where global investors are encouraged to invest with the assurance that their investment will be protected. Investors must be able to see that the peninsula is secure and progress is being made towards reunification: a reunification that will take place in the future, but one that is already on the minds of the next generation.

The youth of both North and South Korea yearn to be reunited as one Korea. Nationalism is on the rise. It is not a matter of 'if,' but a matter of 'when,' the two countries will reunite. And more importantly, under what conditions reunification will transpire. The region is fragile and prone to conflict. The democratic government of South Korea is young by international standards, having only last year elected its fourth president. The youth of Korea embrace the "Sunshine Policy" as did the new elected president of South Korea. However, President Roh Moo-hyun soon realized the current nuclear crisis would impede his ability to continue the policy of his predecessor. President Roh must now prepare to deal with the crisis. There are many options for dealing with the current situation; each option must address Korea today and more importantly its future, a future that remains on hold as long as the nuclear issue remains unresolved.

#### **OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH THE NUCLEAR ISSUE:**

The Korean Nuclear issue is most challenging for even seasoned veterans of foreign relations. I would like to explore three options that have been suggested by scholars of Asian Studies.

Selig S. Harrison, is the director of the Asia Program at the Center for International Policy, a senior scholar of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and director of the Century Foundation's Project on the United States and the Future of Korea. He has specialized in South Asia and East Asia for fifty years as a journalist and scholar and is the author of six books on Asian affairs and U.S. relations with Asia. Harrison recently served as the chairman of a Task Force on U.S. Korea Policy along with Bruce Cummings, Director of the Korea Program at the UCLA Center for East Asian Studies. The Task Force was composed of 28 scholars, statesmen and military officers. While the backgrounds were diverse, it is worth noting that none of these individuals' were representatives of their organizations. The opinions expressed were those of individuals and did not necessarily reflect the official policy of the U.S.

Government or other agencies they may have been employed by at the time of the writing. Among the ranks were three Ambassadors and two flag officers.

Over the course of three meetings, Selig Harrison compiled a report that was vetted by the group at large. The report that was published thus represented the consensus of the Task Force. This report is entitled "*Turning Point in Korea, New Dangers and New Opportunities for the United States*."<sup>23</sup> The Task Force developed nine key recommendations for peaceful resolution to the current crisis. I will focus on the three recommendations for actions that could bring about a satisfactory conclusion of the current crisis.

#### OPTION ONE: UNILATERAL NEGOTIATION BETWEEN NORTH KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES

"The United States should offer to negotiate directly with North Korea on all issues of concern to both sides, including the dismantlement of its nuclear weapons capabilities, its food and energy needs, and the full normalization of political and economic relations, provided that North Korea pledge not to reprocess the irradiated fuel rods that have been monitored by the IAEA inspectors under the 1994 Agreed Framework, and to permit the return of the recently-expelled inspectors to resuming their monitoring. North Korea would pledge in this declaration to negotiate the verified dismantlement of all aspects of its nuclear capabilities. Both sides would pledge that they would not use force against the other during negotiations on dismantlement, and that upon the successful conclusion of the dismantlement, they would categorically rule out the use of force against each other thereafter. The United States would pledge to respect North Korean sovereignty and not to hinder its economic development."<sup>24</sup>

#### OPTION TWO: RENEGOTIATING THE AGREED FRAMEWORK

"The Agreed Framework should be renegotiated to provide for the construction of one light water reactor, not two, and substitution of conventional energy alternatives for the electricity that would have been supplied by the second reactor. North Korea would have to reaffirm its commitment to other existing provisions of the accord. In addition, North Korea would have to accept new provisions that would end its efforts to produce enriched uranium under adequate verification."<sup>25</sup>

#### OPTION THREE: REDUCING THE MILITARY FOOTPRINT; LESS IS BETTER FOR KOREA

"Lower the U.S. military profile. Before opposition to the U.S. military presence reaches serious proportions and leads to significant pressures for disengagement, the United States should defuse this opposition by lowering the U.S. military profile in South Korea and offering to

make changes in the size, character and location of U.S. deployments.”<sup>26</sup> This option in and of itself is not enough to end the current crisis. In fact this option may best be seen as a negotiable condition to either of the first two options. This option is not a recent revelation either. Robert Rich published a case study in June 1982, “Withdrawal of U.S. Ground Forces from Korea, A Case Study in National Security Decision Making.”<sup>27</sup> Recently, General Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told attendees at the Council on U.S. - Korean Security Studies, that our footprint in Korea has served us well for the past 50 years; however, in light of current technologies and the military capabilities demonstrated in Afghanistan and Iraq, there is an opportunity to be more efficient.<sup>28</sup>

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The first option is the most viable option for resolving the nuclear crisis. Diplomacy must continue to be given a chance. Diplomacy in the form of multilateral talks needs to continue in addition to unilateral talks between the United States and North Korea. In fact, all five of the nations involved in these multilateral talks are seeking to reconvene talks by the end of the year.<sup>29</sup> But what is best for Korea is a combination of both options one and three. In fact, there may be facets of the Agreed Framework that can be salvaged in the interest of time. But the key to disarming the current crisis will be sustained negotiations.

Sustained negotiations can lead to North Korea abandoning its nuclear program. Such negotiations must be seen as credible and serious. In order for this to occur, the hard-line rhetoric that often finds resonance within the Bush administration must cease, as it is both provocative and counterproductive. The application of the Bush Doctrine is not an option; North Korea does not pose a direct threat against the United States now or in the immediate future.

Concerning the terrorist threat from North Korea, the only connection between North Korea and other members of the “Axis of Evil” is financial at best. North Korea is a closed society and there is no evidence that it has knowingly supported terrorist organizations during the past two decades. There is no linkage between Kim’s regime and al Qaeda. Unless the United States can unequivocally demonstrate that North Korea is transferring nuclear material or weapons of mass destruction to other rogue states or terrorist organizations, no legitimate argument can be made for pre-emptive military action. The administration needs to tone down the rhetoric and come to the table prepared for either unilateral or multilateral discussions or both with North Korea.

Diplomatic negotiations should start with the Agreed Framework. Negotiations and compromises need to be made about which parts of this historical agreement are still valid and therefore merit pursuing. The return of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors at some point in the future should be agreed upon early. This agency serves as independent eyes for the global community showing that steps are being taken to safeguard the weapons grade uranium and that the plutonium production program is returned to a frozen state as agreed upon in 1994. The IAEA would insure the nuclear weapon program is dismantled. Concomitantly, steps should be taken to finish the first light-water reactor agreed upon in 1994. Getting North Korea to agree to one reactor instead of two could be a political victory for the Bush Administration, which felt that two reactors were too much in the first place.<sup>30</sup>

Economic negotiations should also address food and energy needs. North Korea needs the fuel oil shipments suspended by the Korean Peninsula Energy Organization (KEDO), and these shipments will mostly likely be required prior to shutting down the nuclear reactors. World relief organizations and international food aid should address the needs of the people. South Korea should continue to reach across the DMZ and stimulate economic development. Neither China nor South Korea can underwrite the implosion of the North Korea economy. Another key to these multilateral talks is to stabilize the economy of North Korea by providing aid in the form of fuel oil, food, and the promise of further financial support upon the verifiable full dismantlement of the nuclear weapons program.

Once an agreement can be reached on dismantling North Korea's nuclear program and the dismantling is underway, the United States can then begin to look towards restructuring its footprint on the Korean Peninsula. Our current force structure levels in the area of operations serve as deterrence to a North Korean attack, but the same deterrence can be achieved with fewer troops. Upon the completion of the dismantlement of the North's nuclear program, troop reductions should take place, as both countries will have signed a treaty of non-aggression with each other. These reductions should be monitored by the United Nations and remain completely transparent to the global community.

Conflict on the Korean Peninsula does not seem likely and has not seemed likely for the past decade. Without allies, principally China and Russia, North Korea could not possibly survive an armed conflict with the United States. They might succeed in launching a successful attack against Seoul, but as our military forces have so competently demonstrated in both Afghanistan and Iraq (1991 and 2003), a North Korean attack would be political suicide. The United States has too much at stake in the economic prosperity of Northeast Asia and the

alliances to undertake a pre-emptive strike. A war on the peninsula would destabilize the world financial markets.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has suggested that deterrence and burden-sharing should guide our alliance with South Korea.<sup>31</sup> Today the Pentagon is rethinking the numbers of boots on the ground in Korea. We definitely need to maintain a regional presence in order to retain a credible deterrent option, but with today's operational reach we do not need to be in Seoul. Both Wolfowitz and Pace seem convinced that given the proper structuring we can in fact do more with less in Korea. I would agree that "less is better for Korea": less U.S. Forces and less Korean Forces.

However, reducing tension on the Korean Peninsula by restructuring the U.S. military footprint can only occur when North Korea agrees to dismantle its nuclear program. So let's not get the proverbial cart before the horse; diplomatic negotiations must successfully conclude before the United States and its allies in Northeast Asia can agree to troop reductions.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Walter A. McDougall, "The Riddle of Containment," *New York The Wall Street Journal*, (Eastern edition). New York:28 July 1997 p. A.18.

<sup>2</sup> The Agreed Framework 1994 is the most significant effort to engage North Korea in the past 10 years, as is the South Korean's engagement policy known as the "Sunshine Policy." The Agreed Framework was worked out during and revisited several times during the course of the Clinton Administration; it included talks with North Korea, China, Japan, and South Korea. However, it is the Agreed Framework which remains the cornerstone of the engagement strategy, perhaps this will soon change, but I believe parts of the agreement can be useful in the future.

<sup>3</sup> James T. Laney and Jason T. Shaplen, "How to Deal with North Korea," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2003, p. 16. "The last six months have witnessed an extraordinary series of events in the region that have profound implications for security and stability throughout Northeast Asia, a region that is home to 100,000 U.S. troops and three of the world's 12 largest economies."

<sup>4</sup> Seongo Sheen, "Grudging Partner: South Korea," *Asian Affairs an American Review*, Summer 2003, Volume 30, Number 2, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> Transcript: Presidents Bush, Kim Dae Jung March 7 Press Briefing, <<http://usembassy.state.gov/seoul/www42yr.html>>. Internet accessed October 15, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," 29 January 2002; available from <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>>. Internet accessed September 15, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC, September 17, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> The Agreed Framework was to provide light-water reactors in exchange for North Korean shutting down their nuclear reactors. The U.S. offered oil to burn in the interim while these new reactors were constructed.

<sup>10</sup> The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) was formed in 1995 to move forward the 1994 Agreed Framework. KEDO membership is comprised of 12 countries and the European Union. North Korea is not a member of this organization.

<sup>11</sup> Merrill Goozner, "Nuclear Blackmail," 8 August 2003; available from <<http://www.prospect.org/webfeatures/2003/08/goozner-m-08-08.html>>. Internet accessed September 15, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, "The Korea Crisis," Foreign Policy Online; available from <<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/story.php?storyID+13620>>. Internet accessed October 15, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Buckley, "North Korea's Nuclear Brinksmanship," <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3081424.stm>>. Internet accessed October 15, 2003.



<sup>14</sup> Laney and Shaplen, "How to Deal with North Korea," p. 25. "This would bring Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal to between five and seven weapons by the end of July. It could have enough plutonium for one to three weapons even sooner."

<sup>15</sup> Robert E. Hunter, "After 9/11: US Policy in Northeast Asia," *Asia-Pacific Review*, May 2003, Volume 10, Number 1, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Cha and Kang, "The Korea Crisis."

<sup>17</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, Russia and the United States have sought out each other diplomatic support on issue bearing on nation's vital and important interest. At times this support has called for military intervention. We have seen mutual support to resolving the problem in the Balkans. We have seen an unprecedented level of cooperation with staging and deployment of U.S. force within close proximity of Russia and former USSR countries. Military to military contact has almost become routine.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandre Mansourov, "The Hermit Mouse Roars: North Korea," *Asian Affairs and American Review*, Summer 2003, Volume 30, Number 2, p. 88.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 90. "North Korean leaders are well aware that the Bush administration views their government."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 92. "... the repeated U.S. assertion that Washington will keep 'all options open' in the nuclear standoff."

<sup>21</sup> Transcript: "Powell Says U.S. Committed to Close Relationship with South Korea," <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html>. Internet accessed September 23, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., "We have been strong allies for these past 50 years; we remain so...there is absolutely no change or slackening in the commitment that the United States has to the safety and security of our partner and ally in South Korea."

<sup>23</sup> Selig S. Harrison, *Turning Point in Korea, New Dangers and New Opportunities for the United States* (Chicago, IL.: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.4

<sup>27</sup> Robert G. Rich, "U.S. Ground Force Withdrawal From Korea: A Case Study in Nation Decision Making," *Executive Seminar in National and International Affairs, United States Department of State Foreign Service Institute, 24th Session 1981-82*.

<sup>28</sup> Gerry J. Gilmore, "U.S. Troop Strength in Korea Can be Cut, Pace Says," *American Forces Press Service*, 10 October 2003; available from <<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2003/n10102003/2003101005.html>>. Internet accessed October 11, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network Daily Report, "China Backs More Korean Nuclear Talks in December," Reuters, United Nations, October 10, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Harrison, *Turning Point in Korea*, p. 21

<sup>31</sup> Transcript: "Wolfowitz Cites Deterrence, Burden-sharing with Korea," <<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/easec/wolfkoreacham.htm>>. Internet accessed October 15, 2003



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